

Health and Well-being Survey Report

August 2019



CIEEM

Chartered
Institute of
Ecology and
Environmental
Management

www.cieem.net

INTRODUCTION

CIEEM's 2017-2018 Employment and Salary Survey revealed a profession that is passionate about their work, highly committed and motivated. But it also revealed a deep unhappiness with the reliance on working long and often unsocial hours, especially during the spring/summer months and there were many comments from respondents about the impact of work on their physical and mental well-being and their family life. Since our health is a combination of our physical, mental and social well-being this suggested worrying signs of a health issue that was becoming 'accepted' as just the way it is

in ecology and environmental management.

We wanted to unpick this a little more and created this survey to inform the planning of our Summer Conference which was on health and well-being in the profession. This report summarises the results from the survey and proposes some ideas for next steps, including feedback from conference delegates.





The Respondents

Almost 700 members responded to the survey representing 13.5% of the professional membership eligible to take part. Figure 1 shows the breakdown by membership grade. Just over 60% of respondents were female, almost 38% were male. Three respondents were gender neutral and the remaining 8 preferred not to say.

Approximately half of the respondents were in the 31-49 year age range, with a quarter being younger and a quarter older. Interestingly almost half of the respondents worked for organisations/companies with more than 20 members of staff working in multiple workplaces. Just under 14% of respondents were sole traders/self-employed.

Figure 2 shows the breakdown by employment sector and Figure 3 the breakdown by job level. The proportion of consultancy respondents was higher than the CIEEM membership profile whereas statutory nature conservation organisations and NGOs were under-represented in the survey results when compared with the membership profile.

Figure 1 Survey respondents by membership grade

- Qualifying
- Graduate
- Associate
- Full
- Fellow

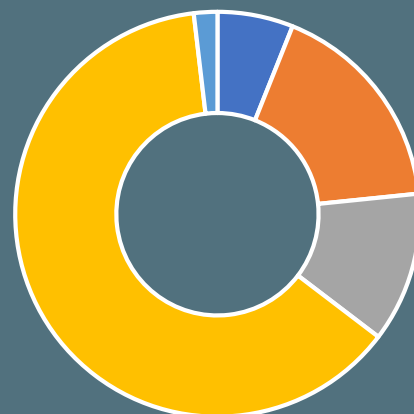


Figure 2 Respondents by employment sector

- Consultancy
- NGO
- Local/National Government
- SNCO
- Academia
- Industry

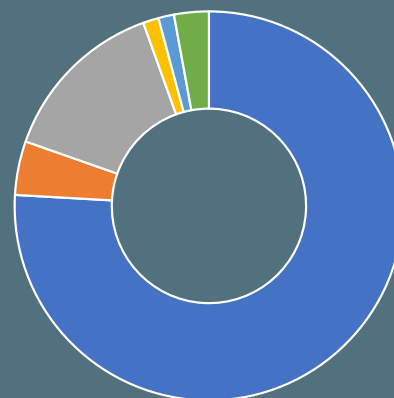
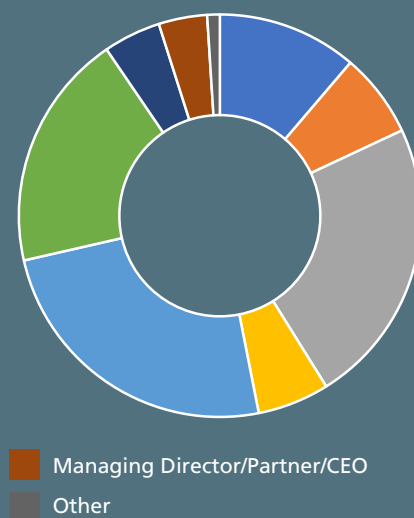


Figure 3 Respondents by job level

- Owner
- Graduate/Assistant/Technician
- Ecologist/Coordinator/Officer
- Advisor/Lecturer/Consultant
- Senior Advisor/Senior Consultant/Senior Lecturer/Technical Specialist/Team Leader
- Principal/Manager/Director/Senior Specialist
- Programme Leader/Technical Director/Head of Department/Associate Director
- Managing Director/Partner/CEO
- Other



Limitations of the Data

As with any voluntary survey, the data will only reflect the views of those who were sufficiently motivated by the subject matter to respond, and therefore may not be wholly representative of the profession. Some respondent 'groups' were very small (e.g. gender-neutral respondents = 3, academia members = 9, SNCOs = 9) and care needs to be taken in drawing conclusions from these data.

Work Patterns

The majority of full-time workers are either working an average 30.5-40 hours per week (41.85%) or 40.5- 50 hours per week (37.66%). Just under 6% work in excess of 50 hours per week. There was little variation across the age range of respondents although the majority of those working 50+ hours per week were in the 50+ age category. As we discussed in the Employment and Salary Survey 2017-18 report, these work patterns indicate a very high level of hours regularly worked in excess of contracted hours. They are not always remunerated through time off or overtime payments either. Many part-time workers also work extra hours.

It was interesting to note that for sole traders/self-employed respondents the figures were lower, with 22.92% working 30.5-40 hours per week and 26.04% working 40.5-50 hours per week. However, 12.5% of self-employed respondents regularly work in excess of 50 hours per week (not dissimilar to employed respondents in the 50+ age category). The results also reflect the number of part-time workers that are self-employed rather than employed, possibly because of the greater flexibility this can give them. This itself poses a question as to the number of part-time employment opportunities available in the profession.

Figure 4 shows the average percentage of work time spent away from home. Whilst over two thirds of respondents spend less than 20% of time away from home, almost one third are spending at least 1 day a week away. The figure is very slightly higher for sole traders/self-employed respondents (36%) and for all consultants (38%).

For employed respondents, it was very noticeable that a much higher proportion of 18-30 year olds (57%) spend more than 20% of the working week (on average) working away from home when compared with 31-49 year olds (23.38%) and 50+ year olds (29.3%). Just over 14% of employed 18-30 year olds, often amongst the more junior grades in an organisation, spend

more than half of the working week away from home. Slightly more males than females spend more than 20% of the working week working away from home (36.5% males, 30.5% females) which appears to be linked to the fact that a higher number of females work part time, potentially linked to carer responsibilities.

Working away from home can have very different impacts on different personalities as well as being influenced by personal circumstances and responsibilities. Figure 5 shows, on a scale of 1 – 10, the personal impact of working away where 1 = feeling very isolated and/or unsupported, 5 = no impact and 10 = feeling very valued and/or well supported. Whilst the most



Figure 4 Average percentage of time spent working away from home

- <10%
- 11-20%
- 21-30%
- 31-40%
- 41-50%
- More than 50%

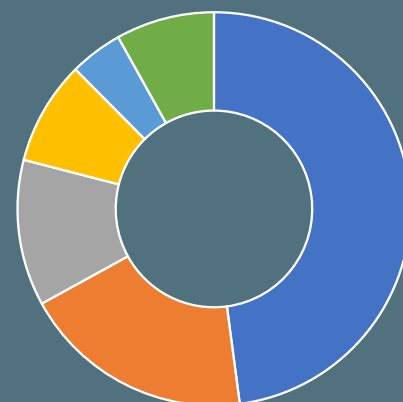
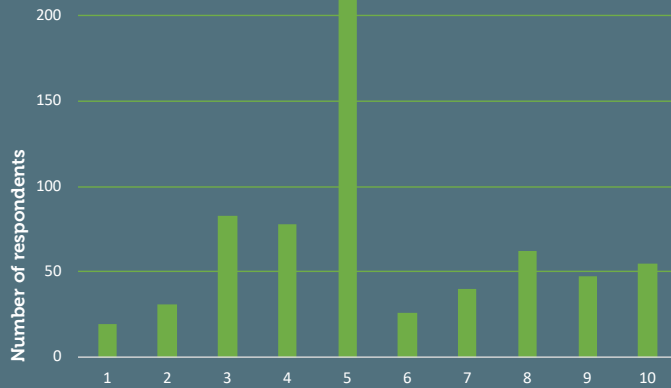


Figure 5

Impact of working away from home for all respondents (1 = felt very isolated/unsupported, 5 = no impact, 10 = felt very valued/well supported)



common response was no impact, there is also evidence that it can have quite severe negative impacts on some people as well as very positive impacts on others. A good illustration of the fact that we are all different.

For example, 44% of 50+ year olds felt that their time working away from home was valued and supported by their employer to some degree. The figures for 31-49 year olds was 34% and for 18-30 year olds had dropped to 25% (see Figure 6). So, regardless of age bracket, significantly less than 50% of respondents felt that their time working away from home was valued and supported which is very disappointing in a profession where it is so prevalent. But is there also a serious issue regarding the expectations and pressures being placed on those in the early years of their profession?

There was no obvious gender difference in relation to the positive or negative personal impacts of working away from home but for all three gender neutral respondents, the impact of working away from home was negative/very negative.

Figure 6

Impact of working away from home for 18-30 year old respondents (1 = felt very isolated/unsupported, 5 = no impact, 10 = felt very valued/well supported)



Health and Well-being Policies

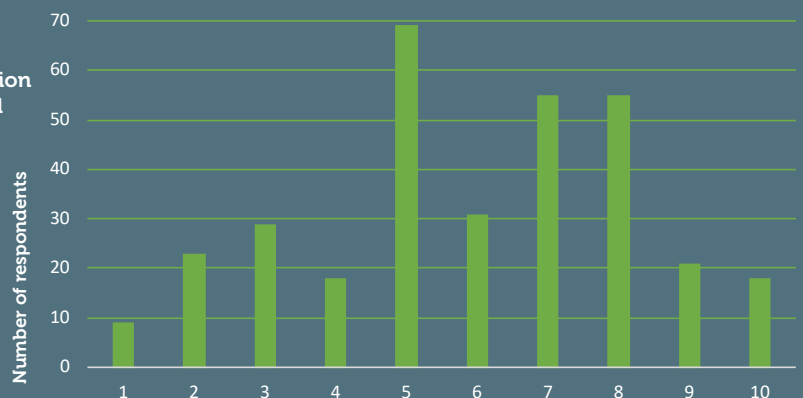


For those respondents who are employed, we were pleased to see that over half (57%) worked for organisations or companies that had Health and Well-being policies in place (in addition to Health and Safety policies). This figure dropped slightly to 49.64% for those working for organisations with 20 or fewer employees. The effectiveness of implementation of policy into tangible actions was variable (see Figure 7) although there were more responses on the positive side of neutral than the negative, except for those working in academia.

Given the responses above about working away from home it would be interesting to know whether these health and well-being policies specifically address the issue of lone working/working away for those organisations where it is relevant.

Figure 7

Effective implementation of health and well-being policies by employers



Health and Well-being Concerns and Support

In response to a question about which health and well-being issues are causing the most concern, there was a greater emphasis on factors that can contribute to mental health issues rather than physical (although both tiredness and stress can also lead to physical illness and accidents). Unsociable working hours, long working hours, unrealistic workloads, lack of development opportunities and the mental demands of the role were the five most commonly cited issues overall (see Figure 8). However, there was considerable variation across employment sectors (see Figure 9).

Respondents working for NGOs, SNCOs, Industry and local/national government cited the lack of development opportunities as a bigger issue than unsociable/long working hours and the mental demands of their role. Perhaps surprisingly (and worryingly) over 80% of respondents working for NGOs and three quarters of those working for

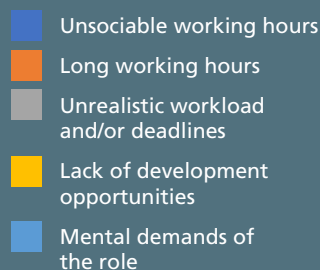
Figure 8

Issues causing concern to health and well-being



Figure 9

Respondents' (by sector) concerns about 5 common well-being issues



SNCOs are concerned about unrealistic workloads/expectations.

Figure 10 illustrates how the same issues are viewed by gender. With the exception of lack of development opportunities, female respondents expressed greater concern about the key issues affecting their health and well-being (NB: There were only 2 gender neutral respondents to this question).

There was a wide range of organisational health and well-being-related services provided by employers (see Figure 11) with annual leave in excess of the statutory

Figure 10

Respondents' (by gender) concerns about 5 common well-being issues

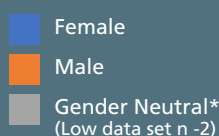


Figure 11 Health and Wellbeing Services Provided by Employers



minimum, flexible working hours, loans towards or discounts on bicycle purchases, counselling or employer assistance programmes and work area assessments/adjustments being the most common.

Despite this it was disappointing to see that only support from peers scored an average of over 60% for employed respondents in terms of valued sources of support for mental health issues within their organisations, and that was on an informal basis (see Figure 12) although Team Leaders scored almost 50%.

There was some variation amongst employment sectors (see Figure 13). Academic respondents are the least likely to view their peers as a source of support, even informally. For self-employed respondents, over two-thirds (73%) felt comfortable or very comfortable discussing health and well-being issues with peers, perhaps suggesting a stronger sense of 'community' amongst self-employed members.

Reassuringly, over 60% of employed respondents felt comfortable or very comfortable discussing health and well-being issues internally in their organisations but again there was variation by sector (see Figure 14) with academic respondents least likely to feel comfortable discussing health and well-being issues internally. That still leaves an average of 40% across all sectors who are not comfortable raising health and well-being issues (and 10% who would feel very uncomfortable).

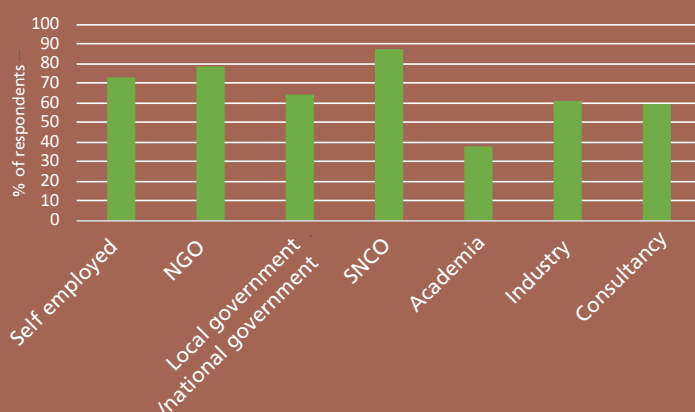
Openness is critically important to managing well-being effectively. Creating a culture where staff can feel confident in discussing issues and concerns is the responsibility of leaders.

Figure 12 Sources of support for mental health issues



Figure 13

Respondents valuing support of peers



In terms of who members felt confident discussing health and well-being issues with, co-workers and line managers scored most highly but still at less than 40% of respondents (see Figure 15). Employer supported or external helplines did not score highly despite the trend towards employers providing these services. Just over 5% of respondents would not feel comfortable discussing their concerns with anyone work-related.

Figure 14

Employed respondents (by sector) attitude to discussing health and well-being issues

Comfortable
Very comfortable
Total

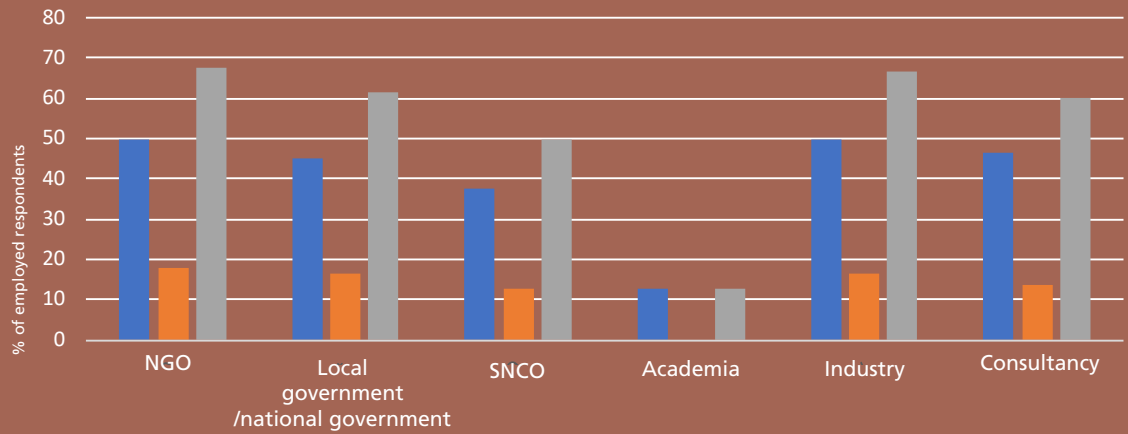
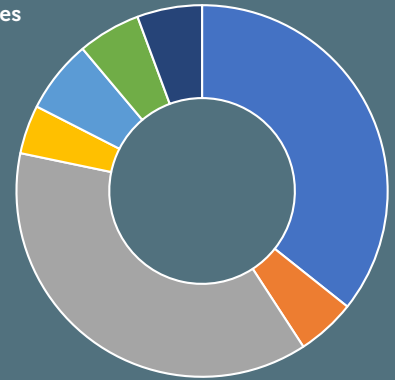


Figure 15

Who respondents would feel confident discussing health and well-being issues with within their organisation

Line manager
HR
Co-worker
A Mental Health First Aider
Anonymously via an employer supported helpline
Anonymously via an external helpline
No one



Experiencing Health-related Problems and Work



Our survey asked to what extent members had experienced health-related problems that had affected their ability to work. A quarter of respondents had experienced significant or very significant mental health issues, which was double the number reporting very significant or significant physical health problems (12.6%) (see Figures 16 and 17). Almost 14% had noticed very significant or significant behavioural changes that affected their work. There was some variation amongst sectors. For example, 20% of self-employed members had experienced very

Figure 16

Percentage of respondents who have experienced physical health issues that have affected their ability to work

Very significantly
Significantly
Moderately
Not at all



Figure 17 Percentage of respondents who have experienced mental health issues that have affected their ability to work

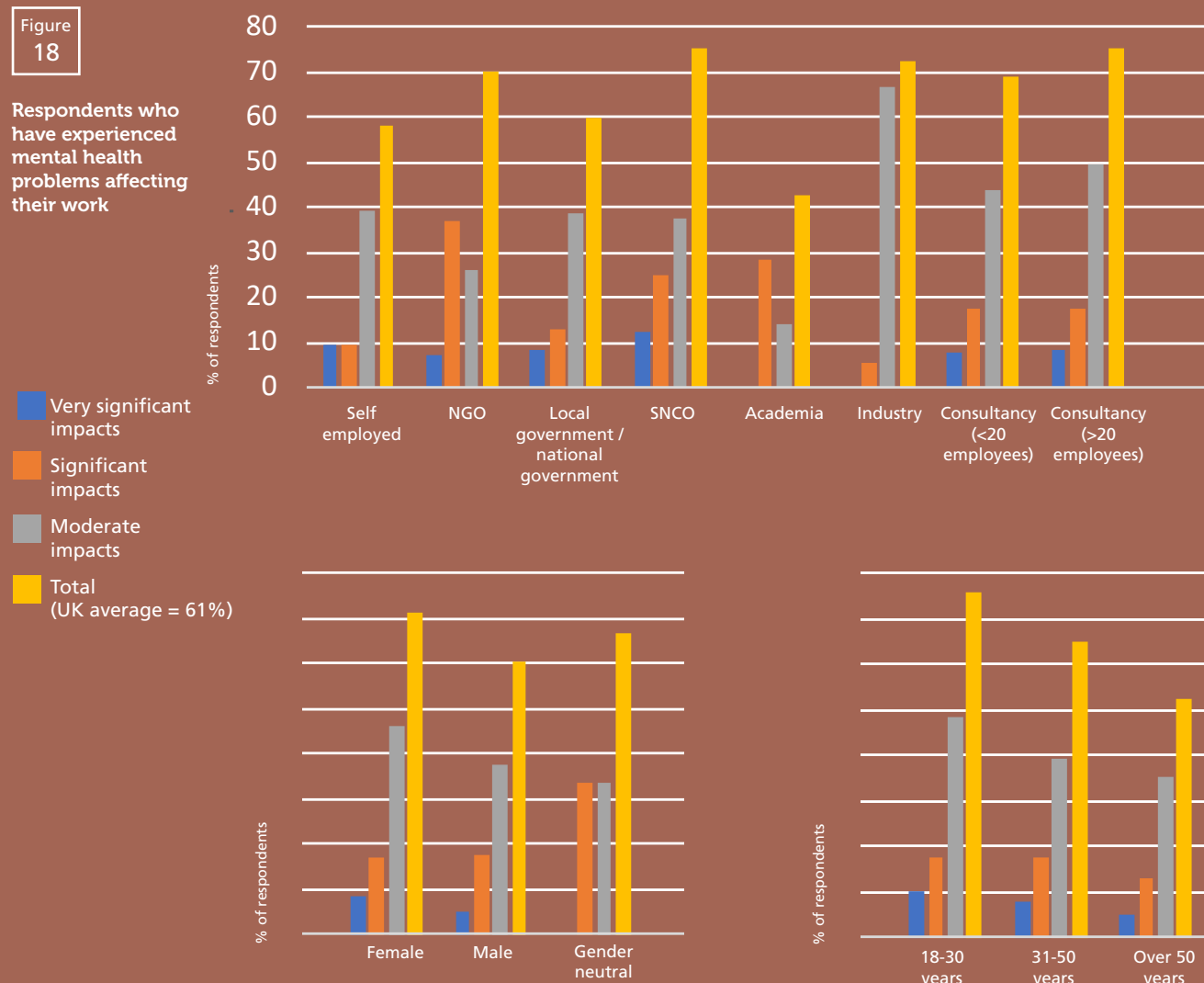


significant or significant mental health issues (which is lower than the overall average) but 19% had experienced very significant or significant physical health issues (which is higher than the overall average).

These numbers are worrying. For example, if we focus on mental health and combine the quarter of respondents mentioned above with the 43% who reported experiencing mental health problems that had a moderate impact on their work we have a total of 68%, which is above the UK average of 61% cited in the Business in the Community's

Figure 18

Respondents who have experienced mental health problems affecting their work



2018 report *Seizing the Momentum*¹ (NB: comparable figures have not been found for Ireland). This is for a profession that generally reports a high level of job satisfaction².

Combining this finding with the reluctance of people to discuss their health and well-being issues within the workplace, a potential scenario emerges of members experiencing health issues that they feel they are

unable to raise with their employers – a situation which could well exacerbate the impact of the illness. This would seem to be reinforced by the information that 46% of those reporting mental health issues had attributed their illness to something else rather than feeling able to be open with their employer/line manager. A further 15% had done so on some occasions.

Again, there are some variations by employment sector, gender and age. Figure 18 shows how respondents vary in terms of the extent to which they have experienced mental health problems relative to the UK average.

Whilst fewer mental health issues were reported by members working in academia, numbers were significantly above the UK average for those working in consultancy, industry, SNCOs

and the NGO sector. The NGO and SNCO sectors are the most worrying in terms of the level of very significant and significant impacts (but note the small number of SNCO respondents).

A higher proportion of female respondents than male or gender-neutral respondents reported experiencing mental health issues that impacted on their work, especially in relation to moderate impacts. Whilst this is consistent with published research³ there is also strong anecdotal evidence that women are more likely to disclose mental health illness than men⁴.

One area of data that should be of serious concern to us all is the proportion of young professionals that have experienced mental health illness that affects their work (75.65%). Again, evidence shows that younger adults⁵

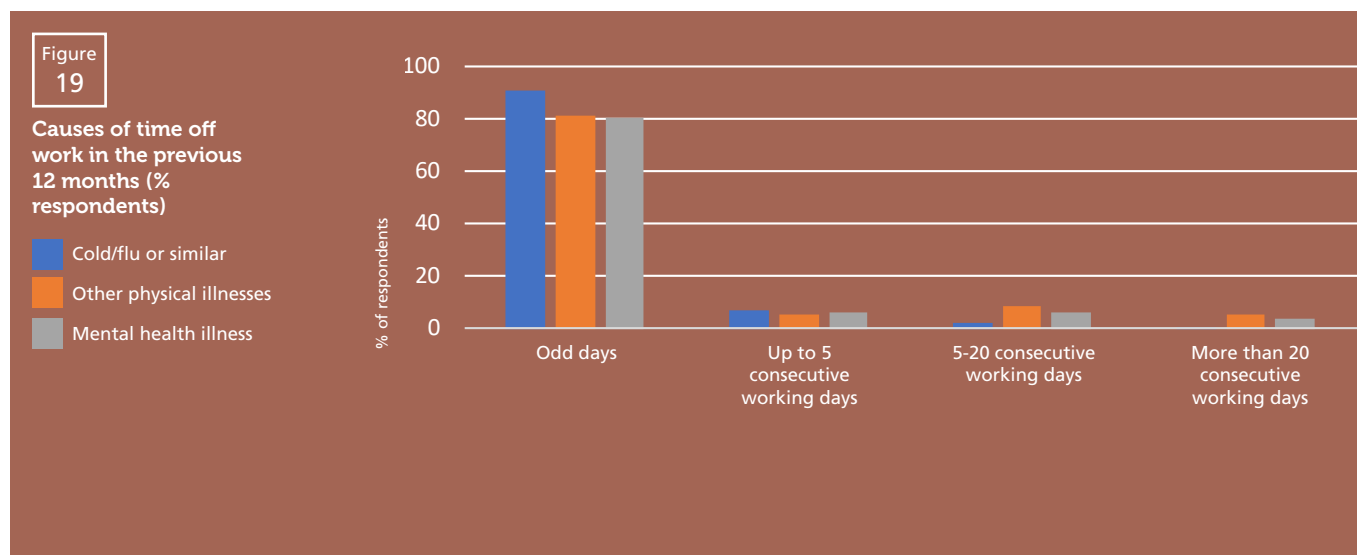
are a) more likely to experience mental health issues and b) more likely to be open about them in a changing climate of awareness and openness but it is also true to say that, in their professional lives, young people are very likely to be in more junior roles and potentially less likely to be confident about openly discussing their mental health with colleagues.

We have to ask whether, as a profession, we are taking enough care of those for whom we, as managers, are responsible.

Figure 19 shows that, despite respondents reporting more mental health issues than physical health issues at work, this does not necessarily translate into more time off work to recover. For example, whilst 170 respondents reported experiencing very significant or significant mental health

issues in the workplace, only 22 respondents had taken more than 5 consecutive days off work in the past twelve months. Self-employed respondents have the added driver of losing income if they take time off work.

Perhaps the experience/confidence in their employer of those who have experienced health problems is very different from the general perception of how well employers do in these situations. Less than 16% of respondents who had been off work for more than 5 consecutive days reported that the return to work support from their employer had been unsatisfactory. Despite this 46% of respondents who had been off work with mental health issues said that they had attributed the absence to something else. A further 15% had done so on some occasions.

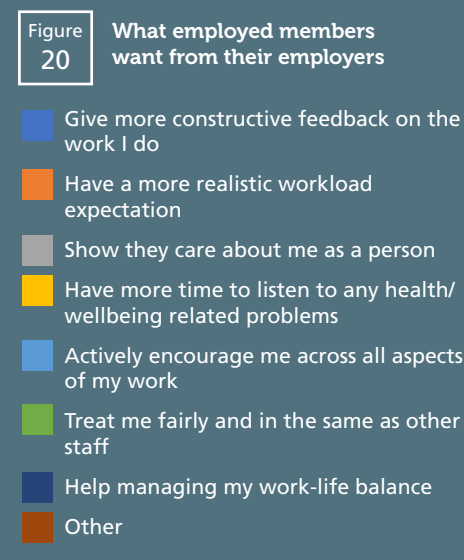


What Members Want

The most strongly desired action from employers across all employment sectors is to help their employees with managing their work-life balance and, strongly linked to that, being realistic about manageable workloads and deadlines (see Figure 20).

Amongst comments in the 'other' category were:

- To deal with annoying colleagues.
- My manager is great / I am well supported.
- To ask me how I am from time to time.
- Restrict email access to working hours only.



- Address causes of stress in the workplace.
- To deal with the underlying issues that cause the symptoms, not just the symptoms.

Of course, what self-employed members want is somewhat different:

- A less stressful licensing system.
- Less demanding clients.
- Less confrontation with clients/planners/SNCOs.
- More networking opportunities with peers to reduce isolation.
- Other people to realise that being self-employed does not mean you are always available to do odd jobs around the house.
- An answer to how much work coming in is enough?

Managers views were varied:

- Staff are our most valuable resource and it pays us to look after them.
- We are doing our best but have a responsibility to take on enough work to keep people in jobs throughout the year.
- It is the way the industry works and profits are tight.
- Managers need to be trained to support staff.
- We are a buffer between our staff and the senior management – not comfortable!

There were also a number of suggestions for action by CIEEM:

- Encourage/support whistleblowing on unsafe working practices.
- Check whether bat work qualifies as a legal reason for giving health checks.

- Make guidance more realistic.
- Provide more support for business owners.
- Set industry limits for working hours/number of unsocial hours surveys, etc. and require employers to follow them.

Next Steps

The survey results have raised a number of issues regarding the health and well-being of the profession. Not all are surprising. Anecdotally, the long and unsocial hours and workloads within the profession have been apparent as an issue for some time. Some respondents have pointed out that we are not alone in this, but that does not make it right.

This survey was undertaken to inform our 2019 Summer Conference on Health and Well-being in the profession. The Conference itself highlighted many of these concerns and there was a strong desire amongst delegates to find the will to tackle them.

Clearly, we do have serious health and well-being issues that are the result of how we work and we need to look into this more closely, especially with regards to how those in the earlier stages of their career are being treated. Whilst CIEEM can draw attention to these issues and provide a means

of facilitating discussion, potential solutions need to be developed collaboratively with our members and employers as the key stakeholders in the profession.

CIEEM is committed to maintaining a focus on health and well-being moving forwards. We want things to change and we hope that you do too. Just talking about health and well-being openly is an important step but we cannot stop there.

Ideas put forward to date include:

- More detailed guidance on aspects of good working practice that affect health and wellbeing and the development of industry 'norms'.
- Sharing case studies of individuals and organisations that have successfully improved health and wellbeing through targeted actions.

- Asking our Geographic Sections to run facilitated workshops to discuss some of the issues raised and possible solutions (to then be fed back via the Advisory Forum).
- Exploring how other industries have effected change and learning from their examples.

Over the next few months we will be exploring these and other ideas with members who want to help make a difference. We will be developing an agenda for change and consulting on it. We would welcome support from members from across our profession. Together we can make this the start of a journey to make ecological and environmental management a prouder profession, more attractive to aspiring entrants and rewarding for all regardless of age, gender, sector or seniority.

If you would like to be involved please do contact us at enquiries@cieem.net

Endnotes

- 1 Business in the Community (2018) Seizing the Momentum: Mental health at work 2018 report. London
- 2 CIEEM (2018) Employment and Salary Survey 2017-18. Winchester
- 3 McManus S, Bebbington P, Jenkins R, Brugha T. (eds.) (2016) Mental health and Well-being in England: Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014. Leeds: NHS Digital.
- 4 <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/nov/05/men-less-likely-to-get-help--mental-health>
- 5 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-41125009>



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